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## The relationship between early family experience and courtship violence

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY FAMILY  
EXPERIENCE AND COURTSHIP VIOLENCE

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Psychology

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by  
Jodi Lynne Weiner  
June 1992

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY FAMILY  
EXPERIENCE AND COURTSHIP VIOLENCE

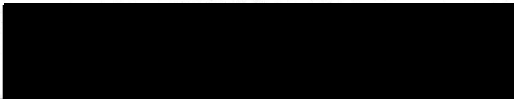
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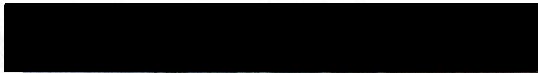
by  
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June 1992

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relation between adult females' early parent-child relationships and courtship violence. It was expected that those who experienced a less secure relationship with their parents during childhood (including having experienced child abuse or observed parental abuse) would be more likely as adults to have problems in intimate relationships, including becoming involved in violent dating relationships. Participants were 79 female college students (36 who had experienced dating violence, and 43 who had not) who ranged in age from 17 to 36 years old. All subjects completed a questionnaire that assessed early attachment history, violence in subjects' family-of-origin, current interpersonal relationships, and dating violence. A direct discriminant function analysis suggested that the primary variable that distinguished between those who experienced dating violence and those who did not was witnessing the parents abuse each other. Other factors included, in order, being abused as a child, having a "less secure" mother-child attachment, and having a "less secure" father-child attachment. Results of this study concur with other research that suggests that dysfunctional early family environments may predispose individuals toward having deficits in later intimate relationships.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Violent Relationship	2
Forms of violent behavior	2
Characteristics of the violent relationship	3
The violent act	9
After the violent act	12
Summary	14
Predisposing Factors of Courtship Violence	15
Abusive families	15
The early parent-child attachment relationship	20
Family environment	26
Personal characteristics	30
Summary	32
Summary and Purpose of Study	33
Method	35
Subjects	35
Measures and procedures	37
Early attachment history	37
Parental Bonding	38
Child abuse	39
Most important dating relationship	39
Dating violence	40
Background information	40
Results	41
Discussion	54
Limitations of Study	59

Summary and Implications	61
Appendix A: Family Environment and Personal Relationship Questionnaire	63
I: Your Early Experiences	63
II: Your Parents Attitudes	65
III: Discipline Styles of Your Parents	66
IV: Your Most Important Love Relationship	68
V: Your Dating Experiences	73
VI: Background Information	75
Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Psychological Research	77
Appendix C: Debriefing Form	78
References	80

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Information for Violent Dating and Non-Violent Dating Groups.	36
Table 2: T-Test Results Comparing the Violent Dating and the Non-Violent Dating Groups on Early Relations with Parents, Experience/Witness Abuse as a Child, Current Relationships.	42
Table 3: Frequencies of Current Attachment for the Violent Dating and the Non-Violent Dating Groups.	43
Table 4: Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood for the Violent Dating and the Non-Violent Dating Groups.	44
Table 5: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations on the Four Contributing Variables for the Violent Dating Group.	45
Table 6: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations on the Four Contributing Variables for the Non-Violent Dating Group.	45
Table 7: Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Those Who Have and Have Not Experienced Abuse From Their Parents During Childhood.	47
Table 8: T-Test Results Comparing Those Who Have and Have Not Experienced Abuse From Their Parents During Childhood.	47
Table 9: Frequencies of Current Attachment and Those Who Have and Have Not Experienced Abuse From Their Parents During Childhood.	48
Table 10: Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Those Who Have and Have Not Witnessed Abuse Between Their Parents During Childhood.	48

Table11: T-Test Results Comparing Those Who Have and Have Not Witnessed Abuse Between Their Parents During Childhood.	49
Table12: Frequencies of Current Attachment and Those Who Have and Have Not Witnessed Abuse Between Their Parents During Childhood.	49
Table 13: Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Those Who Either Had Experienced Child Abuse and/or Witnessed Their Parents Abuse One Another During Childhood With Those Who Had No Such Violence in Their Family While Growing Up.	50
Table 14: T-Test Results Comparing Those Who Either Had Experienced Child Abuse and/or Witnessed Their Parents Abuse One Another During Childhood With Those Who Had No Such Violence in Their Family While Growing Up.	51
Table 15: Frequencies of Current Attachment and Those Who Either Had Experienced Child Abuse and/or Witnessed Their Parents Abuse One Another During Childhood With Those Who Had No Such Violence in Their Family While Growing Up.	51
Table 16: Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Current Attachment.	52

## INTRODUCTION

The family as a setting for violence has received much attention recently, in part because the occurrence of family violence in our society is enormous. According to Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980), some form of family violence (e.g., spouse, sibling, or child abuse) exists in one of every two homes in America in any given year. These abusive patterns of behavior do not stay within the confines of the family, but emerge in other interpersonal relationships as well. Violence in dating relationships (i.e., "courtship violence") is one such example, and it has recently received a great deal of attention due to its high occurrence on university campuses. The following study examines the relationship between subjects' early parent-child relationship and courtship violence.

Courtship violence refers to any physical or verbal abuse between dating couples, including physical force, verbal aggression, or any other act which inflicts, attempts to inflict, or is perceived as having the intention of inflicting harm or injury on another person (Gelles & Cornell, 1985). According to college studies, estimates of the frequency of direct involvement in courtship violence range from 21% to 65% (Arias & Johnson, 1989; Bernard & Bernard, 1983; Brodbelt, 1983; Comins, 1984; Laner, 1983;

Makepeace, 1981; Matthews, 1984; Riggs, O'Leary & Breslin, 1990; Rouse, Breen & Howell, 1988; Sack, Keller & Howard, 1982). In high school, the occurrence has been found to be much lower, with estimates ranging from 9% to 12% (Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd & Christopher, 1983; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985). However, 35% of high school students indicate that they know somebody who is involved in an abusive dating relationship (Roscoe & Callahan, 1985). Part of this discrepancy may be due to the fact that high school students appear to be the least likely population to report dating violence (Roscoe & Callahan, 1985).

### The Violent Relationship

Forms of violent behavior. Violence in dating relations may include verbal abuse and physical force in the forms of pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, punching, throwing something, kicking, kneeing, butting, biting, hitting with a fist, hitting or trying to hit with an object, beating, choking, standing on, rape, attempts to drown, smothering or strangling, and threatening with or using a gun or knife (Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Plass & Gessner, 1983; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Rouse, Breen & Howell, 1988; Sigelman, Berry & Wiles, 1984). The most common forms of violence include punching the partner's face and/or body, pushing, grabbing or shoving, slapping, throwing something at the partner, kicking, biting, hitting with fist, and verbal threats

(Bogal-Allbritten & Allbritten, 1985; Cate, Henton, Koval, Christopher & Lloyd, 1982; Henton et al., 1983; Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Matthews, 1984; Riggs, O'Leary & Breslin, 1990). Forms of violence that are of a more serious nature (e.g., hitting with an object, physical beatings, and threats with or using a knife or a gun) are less frequent in occurrence than are the milder forms (Bogal-Allbritten & Allbritten, 1985; Cate et al., 1982; Makepeace, 1981; Riggs, O'Leary & Breslin, 1990; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985; Sigelman et al., 1984).

The most common forms of violent behavior on the part of males include pushing, shoving, hitting with an object, throwing an object, assault (especially beating up the partner), and weapon threats. For females, the behaviors included throwing objects, pushing, slapping, hitting, scratching, grabbing, kicking, biting, and punching (Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Laner & Thompson, 1982; Makepeace, 1986; Plass & Gessner, 1983; Sigelman et al., 1984). Thus, males engage in more severe types of abuse than females (Makepeace, 1983, 1986).

The various injuries that are sustained from the abusive encounter include bruising, cuts, burns, broken bones and teeth, internal injuries and sometimes even death, with bruising and cuts being the most common (Dobash & Dobash, 1984).

Characteristics of the violent relationship. Violence tends to



occur in relationships that are more "serious" in nature and longer in duration, with both members typically having been involved in violent relationships in the past. In addition, there is (or is perceived to be) unequal dependency and a power imbalance in the partners involved. Each of these characteristics is discussed, in turn, below.

In comparisons of violent and non-violent relationships, the likelihood of violence tends to increase with the seriousness of the relationship (Cate et al., 1982; Comins, 1984; Henton et al., 1983; Laner & Thompson, 1982; Plass & Gessner, 1983; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Rouse, Breen & Howell, 1988; Sigelman et al., 1984). Rouse, Breen and Howell (1988) found in their college population that moderate physical force (i.e., pushed, shoved, grabbed, struck, slapped and punched) was more likely to develop as the dating couple got better acquainted (1-2 year relationship) and the more serious forms of violence were likely to occur even later (more than 2 years in a relationship). Comins (1984) noted that in her college population, the violent relationships, on the average, lasted longer than the non-violent relationships (19 months vs. 13 months). Many who have experienced courtship violence typically report having been in previous relationships where violence occurred (Coleman, 1980; Comins, 1984; Henton et al., 1983; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985). In addition, Comins (1984) found that the subjects' own aggression,

both as perpetrator and in reciprocal incidents, occurred in approximately equal proportions in both past and current relationships. Furthermore, the majority of subjects who have been either aggressors or victims have typically been found to be involved in an incident of violence with the same person on multiple occasions (Bogal-Allbritten & Allbritten, 1985; Comins, 1984; Makepeace, 1981; Matthews, 1984; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985).

Although there seems to be no difference among violent and non-violent couples' perceptions of feeling "stuck" or feeling very involved in their relationships, those involved in violent relationships tend to feel less satisfied in the relationship than the non-violent couples (Comins, 1984).

The relationship between the partners in a violent relationship has been characterized by unmet dependency needs on the part of either or both of the partners, as well as a perceived power imbalance. The abuser attempts to limit the abused person's independence and in the hopes of avoiding arguments and reducing the accompanying violence, the abused reorganizes his/her life around the partner and the partner's demands. This increases the victim's dependence as well as limits his/her supportive network; hence, s/he becomes trapped (Dutton & Painter, 1981). In non-violent relationships, by contrast, partners tend to perceive

that they are "equals" in the relationship (Comins, 1984). Zeegers (1982) concluded that the victim in violent relationships often plays a dominant role in the relationship (i.e., the abuser is actually more dependent on the victim). If the "roles" which maintain this sense of power are disturbed, the masked dependency of the high power person over the low power person is suddenly made obvious. In support of this, Gelles and Cornell (1985) noted that men who batter their wives often feel powerless and inadequate in the relationship. Violence is often used to try to demonstrate one's power and adequacy.

Unequal power in a relationship may cause problems in conflict resolution. According to Dutton and Painter (1981), as the power imbalance magnifies, the person in the low power position needs the high power person more. This cycle of dependency and lowered self-esteem (due to the feeling of powerlessness) repeats itself over and over. The cycle eventually creates a strong, affective bond to the high power person. What may have been initially favorable, even attractive, becomes ultimately destructive to positive self-regard. In the process, both persons may become "fused" together psychologically which fulfills the need created in part by the power dynamic itself.

A power imbalance may in turn produce violent behavior in the relationship. Mason and Blankenship (1987) found that those men

with a strong need for power more often were physically abusive toward their female partner than men with a lower need for power. By contrast, Gelles and Cornell (1985) found households with shared decision making (i.e., equal power) experience the least amount of violence and households where one--either wife or husband--makes all decisions (i.e., power imbalance) are the most violent.

In contrast to the notion of one partner being more dependent on the other, Goldberg (1982) has suggested that marital violence is an interaction between two people who are extremely dependent on each other. He describes them as feeling trapped, frustrated, and disappointed with each other and unable to leave the relationship, yet neither wants to stay or feels fulfilled or comfortable. The feelings of resentment, despair over trying to make things better, and feeling "blocked" by the other person from growing, make the relationship volatile. According to Goldberg (1982), physical violence often erupts due to the rage and feelings of being trapped, while at other times indirect forms emerge, such as coldness, passive and indirect aggression, and hurtful verbal encounters. The physical confrontation is thought to temporarily release the rage and produce the distance that neither partner is able to establish in more healthy, open, and productive ways.

The abusive relationship has also been characterized as an integration of violence with love. Both partners involved in abusive

relationships often interpret the violence as love (Matthews, 1984). According to Henton et al. (1983), romance and violence in dating relationships appear to be accepted as a version of love and war for many couples. Instead of relationships existing on kisses and caresses, they exist on acts of aggression.

There appear to be inconsistent findings with regard to whether males or females experience more violence in the relationship. Laner and Thompson (1982) found that for males, dating violence is a regular pattern of behavior, whereas for females it is more likely to be a one-time occurrence. Arias and Johnson (1989) found no significant differences between males and females reporting use of or being victim of violence. Furthermore, they found that both males and females perceived the females' aggression less negatively than males' aggression. Other studies have found that the partners feel equally responsible for the violent act (Coleman, 1980; Henton et al., 1983; Matthews, 1984), while other studies suggest that males are more often the aggressor, with females more likely to be (or perceive themselves as being) victims (Makepeace, 1981, 1983, 1986; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985; Walker, 1983). In contrast, Rouse, Breen and Howell (1988) found that males were more likely to report their partner using force against them. Still other studies have found that more females than males reported either experiencing and/or inflicting violence (Lane &

Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Riggs, O'Leary and Breslin, 1990). Sigelman et al. (1984) found that more males than females said they had been the target of at least one such act. Regardless of who started it, however, abusive relationships are more often reported by females than males (Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Makepeace, 1986).

The violent act. Research on courtship violence has yielded information on the violent process, including what goes on during the violent encounter itself, and what precipitated the violent event. This is discussed below.

Walker (1983) found in her study that the sample of women described the abusive relationship as cyclical, beginning with increasing tension that leads to an explosion of violence. After the violence there is a period of guilt, remorse, and contrition (which reinforces the victim to remain in the violent relationship), and then the tension begins to build again. However, some of the women in Walker's study did not report a period of remorse. Over time, it appeared that the building of tension became more common, while loving behavior declined.

Dobash and Dobash (1984) stated that there are three major "stages" in the violent event: verbal conflict, threats and evasive action by the victim, and the physical attack. Furthermore, they stated that the violent episodes eventually form an integral part of a dating relationship.

In most studies, reciprocal aggression (i.e., with one partner becoming more aggressive as the other does) occurs more frequently than just one partner being the only abuser (Cate et al., 1982; Coleman, 1980; Comins, 1984; Henton et al., 1983; Laner, 1983). Sack et al. (1982) found that the likelihood of becoming a target of violence is strongly associated with the individuals acting in violent ways themselves.

Comins (1984) found that preceding the violent event subjects reported that they would either leave the room abruptly, or engage in verbal exchange (e.g., shouting, talking quietly). Dobash and Dobash (1984) found that women reacted to the violence by trying to withdraw from the situation, trying to reason with the man, or trying to argue with him, and that there would be screaming, crying or shouting, attempts to escape, or they would become physical.

Sources or causes of violence are often centered on such issues as possessiveness and jealousy, alcohol, friends, sexual denial, drugs, self-defense, children, failure to communicate, misunderstandings, loneliness, demands concerning domestic labor and service, the female trying to leave the relationship or just trying to escape the argument, and money (Coleman, 1980; Comins, 1984; Dobash & Dobash, 1984; Dutton & Painter, 1981; Makepeace, 1981; Matthews, 1984; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985; Zeegers, 1982). Makepeace (1986) found that self-defense



was more often the reason given for violence on the part of the female (Makepeace, 1986; Walker, 1983), and males more often noted that the reason they became violent was because they felt intimidated by their partner (Makepeace, 1986). Dobash and Dobash (1984) found that women revealed that the men were most likely to become physically violent at the point when the woman could be perceived to be questioning his authority, challenging the legitimacy of his behavior, or asserting herself in some way. Coleman (1980) found that the majority of men blamed their partner's verbal aggressiveness for provoking the physical fights.

Laner (1983) found that "personality" or emotional factors often precipitated the abusive event. Females often mentioned that temperamental factors such as anger, irritation, verbal or physical annoyance, power struggles, being upset, stressed, short- or bad-tempered, feeling fed up, being "in a weird mood," or feeling like they were losing control often preceded the onset of violence. Males more frequently implicated emotions and attitudes as the causes of the violent act, including feelings of jealousy, envy, guilt feelings, fearfulness, depression, insecurity, inferiority, low self-image, tenseness, feelings of rejection, frustration, feeling pressured or mistrustful, confusion, anxiety, worry or feeling hurt. Males mentioned "reflexive" factors (i.e., feeling goaded, provoked, or antagonized) more frequently than did females. Personality

factors of individuals mentioned equally for both males and females involved in violent acts include being stubborn, selfish, inconsiderate, disrespectful, immature, unbalanced, disagreeable, impatient, inattentive, and abrupt.

Other interpersonal factors precipitating violent acts include problem- solving dilemmas (e.g., disagreement, argument, fight, problems, poor or no communication and misunderstanding) and misjudgment dilemmas (e.g., teasing, fooling around that turned serious, too much physical contact, spoiled expectancies, getting on each others' nerves, mutual dislike, personality clashes and differences). Situational variables (e.g., stressors external to the relationship) that may precede the violent act include the use of alcohol and/or drugs, having an affair, having a rival, having been abused as a child, and job-related unhappiness (Laner, 1983).

After the violent act. After the abusive episode, Matthews (1984) found that both partners typically try to talk, and both feel hurt and angry about the abusive episode. Reactions to the abuse on the part of the recipient included reacting in anger, feeling hurt, and fighting back. There is a general unwillingness to place blame on the partner. The aggressors react by being sorry, feeling hurt, apologizing, and trying to make up.

The attached meanings given to the violent behavior from both the abused and abuser include anger, confusion, love, hate, fear,

sadness, frustration, feelings of insecurity, and being drunk (Cate et al., 1982; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985). In a study by Henton et al. (1983), many of the subjects, both the abusers and the abused, interpreted the violent behavior as meaning love, but surprisingly few indicated that it signified hate. Most individuals (84%), however, expressed a wish to learn a less violent way to deal with relationship problems ( Matthews, 1984).

After the violent episode, very few individuals tend to report the violent act to anyone. In a study conducted with a population of high school students by Henton and his colleagues (1983), it was found that of those subjects who report such incidents, they are reported to friends (67%), to their mothers (16%), to their fathers (10%), and to their teachers (2%). None of the subjects reported the incident to a law enforcement agency. However, in a population of college students who experienced abuse, five percent contacted legal authorities (Makepeace, 1981). Dobash and Dobash (1984) found there was a reluctance to tell anyone, especially after the first assault, although over time an increasing number of people told someone. At first friends and family were most often told, but eventually assistance was sought from organizations such as legal authorities, social work and the medical profession.

Various studies have inquired about what effect the violent encounter has on couples who engage in courtship violence. While

between 23% to 62% of these relationships had ended (Bogal-Allbritten & Allbritten, 1985; Makepeace, 1981; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985), many of those relationships remained intact. Of those who remain in the abusive relationship, approximately equal proportions of subjects reported an improvement in the relationship, no change in the relationship, and worsened relationships (Bogal-Allbritten & Allbritten, 1985; Cate et al., 1982; Henton et al., 1983; Makepeace, 1981; Matthews, 1984; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985; Sigelman, Berry & Wiles, 1984 ). Surprisingly, Roscoe and Benaske (1985) found that 30% of their subjects in abusive relationships actually married the abusive partner.

Summary. In conclusion, courtship violence has a high rate of occurrence. It is characterized as occurring in more "serious" relationships, is often reciprocal, occurs repeatedly with the same partner, and has often been experienced in previous relationships. Compared to non-violent relationships, violent relationships are more apt to be characterized by dependency and a perceived or real power imbalance. Furthermore, the violent behavior may be a pattern that goes on to other intimate relationships. A surprisingly high percentage of individuals end up marrying this partner.

There are many reasons given as to the causes or sources of violence, yet many people encounter these same problems but do not

resort to violence. Factors that may mediate whether or not a relationship resorts to physical violence are examined next.

### Predisposing Factors of Courtship Violence

Factors that appear to be correlated with courtship violence include 1) a history of abuse in their family of origin, 2) a poor-quality early relationship between individuals and their parents, 3) family environment characteristics, including an authoritarian parenting style, socioeconomic status, and ethnic origin, and 4) personal characteristics including poor self-esteem and rigid sex-stereotyped attitudes. Each of these is discussed below.

Abusive families. Individuals who are either victims of parental and sibling abuse or who have observed abuse in their family of origin may be predisposed toward becoming involved in later abusive relationships. Various studies indicate that people who have experienced dating violence often have either experienced and/or observed abuse in their family of origin (Bernard & Bernard, 1983; Carroll, 1977; Comins, 1984; Riggs, O'Leary & Breslin, 1990; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985; Sugarman & Hotelling, 1989; Walker, 1983). Bernard and Bernard (1983), for example, found that college students were more than twice as likely to become abusive if they either observed or experienced abuse in their families than if they had not. Similarly, Coleman (1980) found

that 64% of a sample involved in marital violence had witnessed and/or experienced violence in their family of origin.

Owens and Straus (1975) found that exposure to violence (whether initiating, observing, or receiving) in childhood is moderately correlated with approval of interpersonal violence as an adult. Gelles (1979) states that it is primarily within the family that one learns that the following are acceptable: 1) to hit people you love, 2) for powerful people to hit less powerful people, 3) to use hitting to achieve some end or goal, and 4) to hit as an end in itself. Thus, being a victim of (or observing) abuse tends to be a powerful pro-violence learning experience which in turn has a high probability of becoming incorporated into one's behavior repertoire (Straus, 1980).

How does being physically abused as a child affect a person? The family is the primary socialization instrument, and thus it becomes the key instrument for teaching attitudes, values and behaviors to children. In addition, during childhood, one's views of the world are forming, and new data can easily challenge and influence children. Abusive experiences may become integrated into children's perceptions of themselves and their behavior repertoire, and also may influence their views of the world. The exact mechanism by which violence is transmitted from parent to child is still unclear, but it does seem that violence breeds violence.

This may occur, in part, in the ways described below.

First, violence may provide a model for children to imitate.

Physically abused children, for example, are more likely to be more aggressive and violent than non-abused children (Brodbelt, 1983; Dutton & Painter, 1981). A study done by Loeber, Weissman and Reid (1983) on chronic adolescent offenders who were apprehended for assaultive crimes found that when parents tolerated violence (specifically between siblings) in the home, aggression outside the home was often used as a method for adolescent conflict resolution. In a different study on 101 delinquent adolescents (27% of whom had been physically abused as children), more abused (44%) than non-abused (16%) adolescents were found to have committed violent crimes of an assaultive nature (Tarter, Hegedus, Winsten & Alterman, 1984). Sack, Keller and Howard (1982) discuss social learning theory as it relates to violence as a product of a successful learning situation. They suggest that it can occur in the following three ways: a) violence can be taught through exposure to violence, b) it can be learned through viewing violence from appropriate role models, and c) both exposure to and experience with violence can lead an individual to learning norms which approve of violence.

A second way in which violent behavior may be transmitted from parent to child is that parental abuse may communicate the appropriateness of physical aggression in a love relationship



(Kalmuss, 1984). Such behavior communicates the acceptability of physical aggression within the family as a means of expressing anger, responding to stress, or controlling the behavior of others. Kalmuss (1984) found that simple exposure to aggression between specific family members teaches children the appropriateness of such behavior. The child who witnesses or experiences this thus may learn that violence is acceptable in those specific roles. Hence, parents who hit each other (and not necessarily the child) teach the acceptability of marital aggression more than of parent-child aggression (i.e., "role specific" violent behavior). Support for this was found in Sugarman and Hotaling's (1989) study where witnessing parental abuse as a child was a stronger predictor for later marital violence than experiencing abuse as a child. In contrast, Bernard and Bernard (1983) found that it makes no difference whether a child observes interparental abuse or is the subject of abuse by a parent. According to them, both are equally likely to produce abusive behavior in later partner relationships.

A third way that violence may be taught is through sibling abuse (i.e., siblings who are allowed to physically hurt one another), which tends to be a more frequent and severe form of family violence than spouse abuse (Comins, 1984). In fact, Comins found that sibling aggression was strongly associated with courtship violence. She noted that sibling aggression may reflect parental

conflict resolution styles, and that these styles of interaction may be transmitted across generations.

Being abused as a child also has implications for the development of other social behaviors, which may in turn influence interactive styles. Abused children tend to have fewer friends who are played with less often than non-abused children (Oates, Forrest & Peacock, 1985). These authors suggest characteristics resulting from being a victim of physical abuse (e.g., apathy, withdrawn behavior, and the inability to develop basic trust) persist long after the initial incident, and also spill over into other interpersonal relationships. Abuse is also likely to hamper interpersonal development partly because of the low self-esteem, faulty behaviors, and distorted world view that are characteristic of those who have been exposed to violence. Oates et al. (1985) found that physically abused children show more anxiety, extreme shyness, and fear of failure than do non-abused individuals. Barahal, Waterman and Martin (1981) have found that abused children demonstrate a lack of competence in a number of social cognitive areas, including perceiving little personal control over social events and having inaccurate perceptions of social roles. According to these researchers, abused children tend to be both distrustful of others and to have poor self-confidence. Such children also tend to display deviant behaviors, have poor relations with others, and to show

withdrawn or aggressive behaviors. They also are more likely than non-abused children to engage in stealing or destructive behaviors, have emotional and developmental scars, feel sad and depressed, have difficulty showing and receiving affection, have an impaired ability to establish relationships with both peers and adults, be more fearful, have persistent egocentric views and social skill deficits, display more absenteeism from school, lack impulse control, display less empathy, and have higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse (Barahal, Waterman & Martin, 1981; Kline, 1977; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Lamphear, 1985; Oates, Forrest & Peacock, 1985; Zimrin, 1984).

In summary, being a victim of child abuse and/or being in an abusive family tends to increase the chances of being involved in violent interactions later in life. The exact tie is still unclear, but it may be speculated that people involved in early abusive relationships become more tolerant of the abuse, learn or imitate patterns of abuse, and/or expect abuse in an intimate relationship. In addition, people who have experienced abuse while growing up tend to have social and emotional deficits in their capacity for later social interactions.

The early parent-child attachment relationship. The first social tie that develops between the primary caregiver and the infant is thought to serve as a prototype for all later relationships

(Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Shaver & Hazen, 1985; Yarrow & Pederson, 1972). Montagu (1975) has stated that children who have been inadequately loved find it extremely difficult as adults to understand the meaning of love; they are awkward in their human relationships. This literature suggests that this awkwardness can promote feelings of insecurity which may contribute to providing a setting for violence to occur. For example, insecurity promotes conflict over many issues (i.e., jealousy) that could be destructive.

The quality of early parent-child relationships may in turn affect the adult personality and later love relationships (Shaver & Hazen, 1985). "Secure" attachments to current adult partners are characterized by feelings of security and love, while "insecure" attachments are characterized by feelings of insecurity. Shaver and Hazen (1985) define two types of insecure attachments: 1) insecure-avoidant, and 2) anxious/ambivalent attachments. In their study, they found that securely attached adults described their current most important love experience as happy, friendly, trusting, and supporting of their partner. They described their mothers as less demanding, respectful and less critical, while their fathers were characterized as secure and caring. By contrast, those adults classified as "insecurely-avoidant" attached characterized their current most important love relationship as fearing intimacy,

experiencing emotional highs and lows, and feelings of jealousy. They found that mothers of those adults who were classified as avoidantly-attached were seen as more demanding, critical, unresponsive and less respectful, while fathers were characterized as less caring and less affectionate. Finally, adults categorized as being insecurely-anxious/ambivalent attached described their current most significant love experience as obsessive, desiring reciprocation and union, experiencing emotional highs and lows, and having extreme sexual attraction and jealousy. Their mothers were characterized as unfair and intrusive and fathers were described as unfair and threatening; the relationship between mother and father was characterized as unhappy. Thus, the quality or security of the early relationship, at least as described in this study, may influence the quality of later intimate relationships.

Another way in which the early parent-child relationship may be seen to influence one's later capacity for intimacy and love is demonstrated in a study by DeLozier (1982), who compared abusive with non-abusive mothers. In this study it was found that among the abusing mothers there was a clear pattern of severe attachment disorders. It appears that these difficulties originated from threatened disruption of attachments and severe discipline in their childhood. A major difference among the abusing and non-abusing mothers was that the abusing mothers reported their primary

attachment figures as significantly less accessible and helpful in their childhoods and as adults. Non-abusing mothers, by contrast, reported clear accessibility to their primary caregiver in both childhood and adulthood. DeLozier further states that poor early attachments make it difficult for them to be intimate and nurturant in later relationships.

Insecure attachments were also found among children who were abused. Egeland, Sroufe, and Erickson (1983) found that a high proportion of abused children were found to be anxiously attached to their mothers as infants. In contrast to the non-abused, these abused (and mostly anxiously attached) children were more distractible, had poorer coping ability, were more dependent, had a lower self-esteem, were more hyperactive, and were less persistent. In addition, they were more withdrawn, lacked ego control, lacked enthusiasm, experienced many negative emotions (negativistic, anger and frustration), were noncompliant, and expressed little affection for their mothers as compared to the non-abused group. They were more dependent on, as well as more avoidant of, their mothers. Furthermore, in preschool they later exhibited adjustment problems. Securely attached individuals (and usually those who had not experienced abuse), by contrast, exhibited better social competence and self-esteem, and tended to be more compliant and obedient than the insecurely attached (and usually

abused) group. They (i.e., the securely attached group) engaged in less crime, and tended to have more ego control (i.e., resiliency, competence, and confidence).

It would appear that the personal and interpersonal consequences of being abused or insecurely attached may lead to a higher probability that these individuals will be involved in later abusive relationships. This may be due to their tendency to be more dependent, to have poorer coping skills, to being used to violence, and to have more difficulty self-disclosing, expressing themselves, and communicating effectively (especially in conflict situations). In other words, the characteristics of the abused and insecurely attached person, as mentioned above, enhance the chance of producing misunderstandings and, hence, creating volatile situations due to the inability to deal effectively with these misunderstandings. In support of this, Makepeace (1987) found that in courtship relationships both male abusers and female victims report less closeness with mothers than non-abusers and non-victims. He further speculated that the unmet developmental (perhaps dependency) needs may be important in the cause of courtship violence.

Collins and Read (1990) found that adult subjects with secure attachment styles (i.e., comfortable with closeness and able to depend on others) had a more positive view of themselves ( i.e., a



higher sense of self-worth, greater social self-confidence, and greater expressiveness), and a more positive view of the social world ( i.e., they viewed people as trust-worthy, dependable, altruistic, willing to stand up for their beliefs, and being in control over their lives). Those who were securely attached were also less likely to have a love style characterized as game-playing, obsessive, logical, or friendship-based and more likely to have a style described as "selfless." Subjects classified as insecurely attached had negative beliefs about self, were more mistrusting of others, had a lower sense of self-worth and social self-confidence, and a lack of assertiveness or sense of control. They viewed people as less altruistic, unable to control the outcomes in their lives, complex, and difficult to understand. Subjects who were insecurely attached were more likely to have an obsessive, dependent love style. Furthermore, they found that for both male and female subjects, the opposite-sex parent played a more influential role in predicting the attachment style of the subjects' partner.

Along similar lines, Rempel and Holmes (1986) suggest that the problems adults have concerning trust might be related to unresponsive parenting in infancy. These infants are unable to place trust in their parents because the parents are not there for the infants. Thus, the infant begins life without the confidence and with fears about the risks of emotional commitment. Finally, it has

been noted that parenting styles that are unsupportive, less affectionate, less warm, and rejecting may be destructive to a person's self-esteem, sense of control, social competence and feelings of trust (Baumrind, 1971). Studies have found that adult subjects who were securely attached reported more positive perceptions of their early family environment, had a higher level of self-esteem, and expressed a more trusting attitude towards others than those adult subjects who were insecurely attached (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney and Noller, 1990).

In conclusion, early parenting experiences may influence the development of the early attachment relationship of a person, and the attachments made in the early years might in turn have a pronounced influence on how that person will respond in intimate relationships later on. This may be due to the fact that what is learned in these first relationships reflects the general views about the positive and negative components of interpersonal relationships. If the person had developed a secure attachment when young, their later intimate relationships may be more likely to be "healthy." However, those who were insecurely attached are more likely to have difficulty in forming healthy intimate relationships, which may increase one's chance of participating in abusive relationships later on.

Family environment. A number of factors in the family's

environment (i.e., parenting styles and coping ability) and family demographic features (i.e., socioeconomic status, race, education, and religion) may contribute to the risk of a person becoming involved in an abusive relationship. Each of these is discussed below.

Dating abuse rates are higher for those raised by single parents with authoritarian parenting styles (i.e., harsher and less close) (Makepeace, 1987). Authoritarian parenting styles, in fact, are also frequently found among those who had been the victim of child abuse (Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, Toedter & Yanushefski, 1984), with the least abuse occurring in those families that take an egalitarian approach to decision making (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). The characteristics associated with the authoritarian parenting style (i.e., harsher and less close) may lead to interpersonal deficits on the part of the children. Subjects whose environment as a child was characterized by either low family warmth/high parental punishment or high stress/high parental punishment in combination with abuse were found to be more likely to use abuse in their own families (Carroll, 1977).

Courtship violence has also been found to occur more frequently with individuals associated with low socio-economic status (Plass & Gessner, 1983; Sigelman, Berry & Wiles, 1984), low socio-economic status for the abusive male only (Sugarman &

Hotaling, 1989), high income (Roscoe & Benaske, 1985), or high income for victims only (Plass & Gessner, 1983). According to Makepeace (1987), courtship violence is least likely to occur in the moderate income level. Makepeace noted that abusive couples typically include a female of a higher status background exhibiting strong attraction to an unstable and lower status male who expresses resentment of the "pretentiousness" of his partner's family, which often precipitates disagreements leading to violence. Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs (1985) found that students who reported that their parents earned a high income experienced more abuse, but inflicted significantly less violence than lower income students.

Dating abuse is also more likely to occur in some ethnic groups compared to others. According to Makepeace (1987), the highest rates of abuse in America were among "other race" females (who Makepeace believed to be native Americans and Arabic), while lowest rates were among Asian and those of Jewish ancestry. Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs (1985) found that non-white students (mostly Asian) less frequently reported experiencing and/or inflicting all forms of abuse than whites. Plass and Gessner (1983) found that blacks involved in serious relationships are more likely to be the aggressors. These differences may be due to cultural differences in the perceptions and values of the family.

In addition, Makepeace (1987) noted that among violent couples,

poor academic achievement and suspensions or expulsions were frequent. Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) found that when there was an incompatibility between the partners on level of education the more likely they were to be in a violent relationship. Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs (1985) found that partners whose parents had some college education experienced and inflicted nearly all forms of all types of abuse more than children of parents with high school education or college degrees. Among women at domestic violence shelters, Roscoe and Benaske (1985) found that women with the highest level of education were among those most likely to have been abused as children (41%) and as dating partners (63%). In addition, these subjects were the ones most likely to be physically violent toward their partners in both courtship (32%) and marriage (27%). They noted a few explanations for these findings including the following: this group of women actually did experience more violence in their lives, they were more liberal in their definition of violence, and/or more likely to interpret an action as inappropriate and abusive.

Infrequent church attendance or having no religious belief is also associated with experiencing and inflicting more violence in dating relationships compared to those with religious beliefs (Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985; Makepeace, 1987). This may be because either religion tends to support a close, warm family relationship,

or that it provides a support to turn to when one is at risk for abusing and/or being abused by others. It was also found by Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) that partners of abusive relationships often have different views on religion.

Personal characteristics. Higher rates of courtship violence also tend to be correlated with certain personal and personality characteristics. Emotional and social characteristics shall be mentioned first, followed by the impact of sex-role attitudes on courtship violence.

Bernard and Bernard (1984) found that abusive males tend to feel socially and personally inadequate, frustrated (due to unmet dependency needs), jealous, experience difficulty in identifying and understanding their own emotions, and to be angry. They also tend to have difficulty in expressing their anger, and tend to be irritable, unpredictable, and to have problems with impulse control leading to antisocial acting out. They also often feel insecure and alienated. In addition, people in violent courtship relationships have been found to have lower self-esteem (Comins, 1984; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989) and higher incidences of psychopathology (Comins, 1984) .

Members of the abusive couple are more likely than non-abusive couples to have experienced isolation, early dating, alcohol or drug problems, and multiple firings from jobs (Bernard &

Bernard, 1984; Makepeace, 1987; Sugarman and Hotaling, 1989). They often have deficient skills in negotiation, bargaining, and cooperation, and there may be an inability to perceive other options (Straus et al., 1980). Riggs, O'Leary and Breslin (1990) found that both males and females in abusive relationships have poor problem solving skills. Bernard and Bernard (1984) found that abusive males denied and minimized the frequency and intensity of the abuse towards their partner, and if not initially, they eventually projected blame onto the female. Furthermore, they found that they had a general lack of trust in others and that they tended to be loners. Mature heterosexual relationships tend to be difficult for them to establish. They also often act with little forethought or control. They tend to perceive others as hostile and rejecting, and they often strike out in anger and rebellion. In addition, they often violate social and legal restrictions. All of these characteristics may provoke violence in an intimate relationship.

Sex-role attitudes also may influence whether or not violence occurs. On the whole, males who inflict abuse tended to have a more traditional attitude towards women (Sigelman, Berry & Wiles, 1984). Bernard and Bernard (1984) found that abusive males tend to believe in strongly sex-typed masculine roles, although they may be insecure with their own masculinity. Furthermore, Comins (1984) found that masculine and androgynous sex-roles were associated

with perpetration of aggression. Females who experienced abuse were less clearly sex-typed as feminine than non-abused females (Bernard, Bernard & Bernard, 1985). In contrast, Comins (1984) found that feminine sex-role orientation is associated with victimization and reciprocal aggression. In support of this, Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) also found that battered females have more traditional sex role expectations. In conclusion, the hypothesis that the abusive male is more "masculine" sex-typed has much support but research supporting the findings on the female as either more masculine and/or traditional female are mixed.

In summary, certain personality characteristics may promote courtship violence, including emotional (i.e., poor impulse control, anger, low self-esteem, and psychopathology), and social factors (i.e., deficient communication skills, distrustful, and difficulty forming intimate relationships). Finally, males in abusive relationships are more likely to be masculine sex-typed (i.e., strong masculine roles), although for females the findings are less clear.

Summary. It is probably a combination of the above factors that contribute to or predispose a person to become involved in courtship violence. Of all the factors, however, the family of origin appears to play a most crucial role in the development of later interpersonal violence. The quality of the early parent-child relationship appears to influence later interpersonal relationships,



including one's social competence, self-esteem, ability to trust, and attitude toward violence.

### Summary and Purpose of Study

In summary, the incidence of courtship violence is alarmingly high. Many people unnecessarily experience unhealthy and/or unhappy relationships which cause both physical and emotional harm to both members of the violent relationship that last throughout their lives. Studies show that half of those who experience marital violence were exposed to abuse as children and/or were abused in dating relations. Thus, premarital violence may constitute a rehearsal of sorts for later marital violence. These factors make it imperative to examine and identify the origin of such behavior, so that interventions may be applied to terminate this maladaptive cycle of behavior.

One factor that may begin this cycle is the quality of the early parent-child relationship, as stated above. There are many similarities among insecurely attached children, those who were abused as children, and those who are involved in courtship violence -- e.g., having had experienced early poor-quality parenting, and experiencing later problems in personality and social development. Regarding the latter, all three groups of individuals tend to feel insecure, exhibit distrust and dependency, display poor-problem solving and coping abilities, have a low self-esteem and self-image,

and display frequent expressions of anger. All three tend to be more anxious, aggressive, and to have more adjustment problems compared to those who were securely attached with no history of abuse. Furthermore, these three groups often experience power struggles in relationships and display inadequate social skills. Finally, all three exhibit difficulty forming interpersonal relationships. Abuse in interpersonal relationships, for example, seems to occur in all three.

As stated earlier, the early parent-child relationship is the first social relationship to form, and it seems to be the prototype of later relationships. Perhaps, then, the quality of this early parent-child relationship is a basis for maladaptive interpersonal relations later in life. The primary purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the relation between adult subjects' accounts of their early parent-child relationship and current courtship violence. It was expected that a poor-quality early family environment can predispose one to be more likely as an adult to have deficits in intimate relationships, and to become involved in abusive dating relationships. Specifically, it was expected that those who experienced a less secure relationship with their parents during childhood, and/or experienced child abuse and/or observed parental abuse as a child would be more likely to experience dating violence.

## METHOD

### Subjects

Participants were 79 female college students who were volunteers from four college campuses in southern California. From an original pool of 215 females, 52 were eliminated due to incomplete questionnaire forms, leaving a total of 163 subjects. Of these, 43 subjects had experienced dating violence, while 120 had not. The 43 subjects who had experienced dating violence were then compared for age and socio-economic status with subjects from the non-violent dating pool. Seven subjects who had experienced abuse only one time from the dating violence group were eliminated from the final analyses since it was felt that experiencing abuse only once was not sufficient to categorize an individual as being involved in violent dating relationships. The final sample resulted in 36 females who had experienced dating violence (age range: 17 to 36 years,  $M = 24.6$ ) and 43 who had not experienced it (age range: 17 to 35 years,  $M = 23.5$ ). All of the non-abused subjects had never married, while 9 subjects from the dating violence group had married. These 9 subjects, however, had clearly indicated that they were abused in a dating relationship. The sample was predominantly caucasian, with the majority of subjects were from middle class backgrounds. (See Table 1 for demographic data).

Table 1. Demographic Information for Violent Dating and Non-Violent Dating Groups

	Violent Dating Group (n=36)	Non-Violent Dating Group (n=43)
Age	<u>M</u> =24.61	<u>M</u> =23.49
Marital Status		
never married	75%	100%
Ethnic Origin		
Caucasian	69%	79%
Black	11%	5%
Hispanic	11%	14%
Asian	6%	2%
Other	----	3%
Family Income During Childhood		
under \$20,000	19%	23%
\$20,000 to \$40,000	53%	44%
greater than \$40,000	28%	33%
Family Structure (who lived with during childhood)		
both parents	75%	81%
mother only	8%	16%
father only	3%	----
mother and stepparent	6%	2%
father and stepparent	3%	----
other	6%	----
Father's Education		
no high school degree	17%	9%
high school diploma	31%	26%
trade school diploma	6%	7%
some college	11%	19%

(Table 1 con't.)	Violent Dating Group (n=36)	Non-Violent Dating Group (n=43)
college graduate	14%	28%
post graduate	22%	11%
Mother's Education		
no high school degree	22%	7%
high school diploma	47%	33%
trade school diploma	----	7%
some college	11%	26%
college graduate	14%	21%
post graduate	6%	7%
Number of Siblings	<u>M</u> =2.8	<u>M</u> =2.4
Age Began Dating	<u>M</u> =15.1	<u>M</u> =15.8

### Measures and Procedure

A questionnaire was used to assess early attachment history, parent-child bonding, whether or not abuse was experienced or observed as a child, the quality of subjects' current interpersonal relations, whether or not subject was (or is) involved in abusive courtship relationship(s), and background (i.e., demographic) information. The entire questionnaire took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

Early attachment history. Items from the Revised Love Questionnaire by Shaver and Hazen (1985) were used to evaluate the subjects' early attachment to parents. Half of these items referred to the subjects' relationship with their mother, and the other half

with their father. Questions concerned separation issues and the quality of the attachment relationship as defined by Ainsworth (see Parkes & Stevenson-Hinde, 1982). Subjects responded to open-ended questions or indicated which items applied to them (Appendix A). Questions concerning the security of attachment were rated from 1 (most insecurely attached) to 3 (securely attached).

Parental bonding. The Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979 ) was used as a measure of the quality of the parent-child relationship as remembered during the subject's first 16 years of life. This scale consists of two subscales, including a 13-item scale measuring parental care (affection, emotional warmth, empathy, and closeness) and a 12-item scale measuring parental control (over-protection, intrusion, excessive contact, infantilization, and prevention of independence) (Appendix B). Subjects rated each statement on a Likert scale (1= "very like" their parents; 4= "very unlike" their parents). Parker et al. (1979) found test-retest reliabilities .76 for the care scale and .63 for the control scale. Split-half reliabilities were found to be .88 and .74 for the care and control scales respectively. Inter-rater reliability was .85 for the care scale and .69 for the control scale. Concurrent validity between the two raters scores during a interview and the respective scales produced a Pearson correlation of .77 and .78 for the care scale, and .48 and .51 for the control scale.

Child abuse. Three questions which assessed the type (if any) of abuse that occurred among parent-child (subject), subject-sibling, and between parents were derived from Makepeace's (1987) questionnaire. These questions list various types of abuse, and the subject indicates all that applies to her. These items are then summed to provide three abuse scales (i.e., parent-child, subject-sibling, and parent-parent abuse). In addition, two multiple-choice questions from the Dating History Inventory (Roscoe & Benaske, 1985) were included to examine whether or not the subject was the victim of child abuse, whether the subject grew up in an abusive family, and who abused whom (Appendix C).

Most important dating relationship. The Revised Love Questionnaire (excluding part 3) (Shaver & Hazen, 1985) was used to assess features of subjects' adult intimate relations. The 56 items evaluated the subject's most important love experience. Items were responded to on a Likert-type scale (1= strongly agree, 4= strongly disagree). Based on factor analysis by Shaver and Hazen (1985) (with alphas ranging from .64 to .84), items comprised the following subscale: happiness, friendship, trust, fear closeness, acceptance, emotional extremes, jealousy, obsessive preoccupation, sexual attraction, desired union, desired reciprocation, and "love at first sight." Finally, one question evaluated how securely attached one is to her partner (Appendix D).

Dating violence. The following questions were derived from Part 5 of Makepeace's (1987) questionnaire: whether or not the subject had been involved in courtship violence; and, if so, what type of abuse occurred and how many separate occasions abuse occurred with one partner (Appendix E).

Background information. This section consisted of questions concerning demographic information (e.g., age, gender, marital status, race, income, family structure (who subject lived with during childhood), parents' educational level, and number of siblings), and age dating began. Many of these questions were adapted from Makepeace (1987) (Appendix F).



## RESULTS

Missing data (1% of total data) were recoded to the means for the respective questionnaire items. Means were then calculated for the scales for the violent and non-violent dating groups and *t*-tests were then performed on these means (Table 2). Results showed that those who experienced dating violence were significantly more likely (compared to those who had not experienced dating violence) to report the following: that they had been physically abused by their parents, that they experienced physical abuse from siblings and that their parents physically abused each other. In addition, subjects who experienced dating violence tended to be more likely to have parents who were overprotective than subjects in the non-violent dating group. Although the non-violent dating group reported that their parents displayed slightly more care towards them than the dating violence group, this difference was not significant. It was also found that subjects who experienced dating violence were more likely than subjects who had not to be separated from their mothers for a longer length of time.

Few significant differences were found between the two groups on their current attachment relationships. Contrary to what one might expect, those who experienced dating violence reported being significantly happier compared with the non-violent dating group.

In addition, unlike the dating violence group, the non-violent dating group was more apt to fear closeness with their partner. There were trends toward the violent dating group being more often friends with their current partner and desiring union with a partner. These trends were stronger for the violent dating group than for the nonviolent dating group.

Table 2. T-Test Results Comparing the Violent Dating and the Non-Violent Dating Groups on Early Relations with Parents. Experience/Witness Abuse as a Child, Current Relationships.  
(df=77).

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Violent Dating Group M</u>	<u>Non-Violent Dating Group M</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>2-Tail Probability</u>
<u>Early Relations with Parents</u>				
1. Overprotective parents	18.42	14.74	1.98	.051
2. Parental care	22.44	25.21	-1.62	.110
3. Separation from mother	1.00	.23	2.03	.046
<u>Experience/Witness Abuse as a Child</u>				
4. Experienced child abuse	2.33	1.42	2.59	.012
5. Experienced sibling abuse	4.50	3.30	2.04	.045
6. Witness parental abuse	1.33	.26	3.21	.002
<u>Current Relationships</u>				
7. Happiness in current relationship	13.39	12.07	2.54	.013
8. Friendship with current partner	13.67	12.79	1.84	.070
9. Trust current partner	13.69	12.77	1.57	.120
10. Fear of closeness with				

Table 2 con't	Violent	Non-Violent	t	2-Tail
	Dating Group M	Dating Group M		
current partner	8.25	9.47	-2.43	.017
11. Acceptance of current partner	11.94	11.19	1.42	.161
12. Emotional extremes with current partner	10.89	11.02	-.23	.819
13. Jealousy with current partner	9.78	9.54	.39	.698
14. Obsessive preoccupation with partner	11.67	11.77	-.19	.850
15. Sexual attraction to current partner	12.31	11.84	.95	.347
16. Desire for union with current partner	11.06	9.98	1.75	.084
17. Desire for reciprocation with current partner	12.11	11.49	1.31	.195
18. Love at first sight with current partner	10.67	10.09	1.15	.255

The chi square statistic was used to compare current attachment for the violent and non-violent dating groups (Table 3). There was no significant difference between the two dating groups ( $\chi^2=.272$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.609$ ).

Table 3. Frequencies of Current Attachment for the Violent Dating and Non-Violent Dating Groups.

Current Attachment	Violent	Non-Violent
	Dating Group (n=36)	Dating Group (n=43)
secure	23	25
insecure	13	18
	43	

The chi square statistic also was used to compare attachment to mother and father during childhood for the violent and non-violent dating groups (Table 4). There was a significant difference for mother attachment ( $\chi^2=6.125$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.013$ ), but only a trend towards significance for father attachment ( $\chi^2=3.39$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.062$ ).

Table 4. Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood for the Violent Dating and Non-Violent Dating Groups.

	Violent Dating Group (n=36)	Non-Violent Dating Group (n=43)
Mother Attachment		
secure	18	33
insecure	18	10
Father Attachment		
secure	16	28
insecure	20	15

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was performed on the four contributing variables, i.e., attachment to mother, attachment to father, witnessing parental abuse, and experiencing child abuse for the violent and non-violent dating groups. Results showed that for the violent dating group, having observed one's parents abuse one another and having experienced child abuse were negatively correlated with attachment to father (Table 5). Finally, experiencing child abuse was positively correlated with witnessing

one's parents abuse one another. No significant results were found for these variables for the non-violent dating group (Table 6).

Table 5. Pearson Product - Moment Correlations on the Four Contributing Variables for the Violent Dating Group.

	1	2	3	4
1. Attachment to mother				
2. Attachment to father	.04			
3. Witness parental abuse	.05	-.52***		
4. Experience child abuse	-.24	-.49**	.58***	

\*  $p \leq .05$   
 \*\*  $p \leq .01$   
 \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Table 6. Pearson Product - Moment Correlations on the Four Contributing Variables for the Non-Violent Dating Group.

	1	2	3	4
1. Attachment to mother				
2. Attachment to father	.26			
3. Witness parental abuse	-.01	-.07		
4. Experience child abuse	-.25	-.17	.01	

\*  $p \leq .05$   
 \*\*  $p \leq .01$   
 \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

A direct discriminant function analysis was performed to see if an equation could be developed to accurately categorize the subjects of the violent and non-violent dating groups using four predictor variables: mother-child attachment, father-child attachment, the

amount of the different types of abuse one experienced from their parents during childhood, and the number of different types of abuse one observed their parents use on each other. A Wilks lambda= .807 indicated that, based upon the four variables noted above, a function was identified that discriminated between the non-violent dating and dating violence groups,  $\chi^2(4,77) = 16.090, p < .003$ . The analysis produced one classification equation. Based upon this equation, 69.62% of the cases were classified correctly. While the dating violence group is correctly classified 66.7%, the non-violent dating group is 72.1%. It is slightly easier to classify a person in the non-violent dating group than the violent dating group. The primary variable that distinguished between the two groups was witnessing one's parents abuse one another, followed, in order, by being abused during childhood, mother-child attachment, and father-child attachment.

To test the relationship between violence in the home and the significant variables of this study (i.e., mother attachment, father attachment, whether or not subject experienced sibling abuse, current attachment, and amount of dating violence experienced), *t*-tests and the chi square statistic were used to compare those who had experienced abuse as a child with those who had not. Results showed that there was a significant difference among the groups for both mother ( $\chi^2=6.40, df=1, p=.011$ ) and father ( $\chi^2=4.05, df=1,$

$p=.042$ ) attachment (Table 7). Furthermore, those who experienced child abuse more often experienced sibling abuse than those who had not experienced such abuse (Table 8). Finally, no significant difference was found between the groups for current attachment ( $\chi^2=.094$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.754$ ) (Table 9).

Table 7. Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Those Who Have and Have Not Experienced Abuse From Their Parents During Childhood

	Experienced Child Abuse (n=33)	Did Not Experience Child Abuse (n=46)
Mother Attachment		
secure	16	35
insecure	17	11
Father Attachment		
secure	14	30
insecure	19	1

Table 8. T-Test Results Comparing Those Who Have and Have Not Experienced Abuse From Their Parents During Childhood.

Variable	Experienced Child Abuse (n=33) M	Did Not Experience Child Abuse (n=46) M	t Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tail Probability
1. Experiencing sibling abuse	5.00	2.88	3.82	77	.000
2. Amount of dating abuse	6.83	8.46	-.56	34	.577

Table 9. Frequencies of Current Attachment and Those Who Have and Have Not Experienced Abuse From Their Parents During Childhood.

	Experienced Child Abuse <u>(n=33)</u>	Did Not Experience Child Abuse <u>(n=46)</u>
Current Attachment		
secure	19	29
insecure	14	17

I-tests and the chi square statistic were used to compare subjects who had versus those who had not witnessed either one or both of their parents abuse one another during childhood. It was found that there was no significant difference between these two groups for mother attachment ( $\chi^2=1.20$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.313$ ) (Table 10), sibling abuse or dating abuse (Table 11), or current attachment ( $\chi^2=1.54$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.212$ ) (Table 12). There was a significant difference, however, among the two groups for father attachment ( $\chi^2=3.75$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.050$ ) (Table 10).

Table10. Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Those Who Have and Have Not Witnessed Abuse Between Their Parents During Childhood

	Witnessed Parental Abuse <u>(n=15)</u>	Did Not Witness Parental Abuse <u>(n=64)</u>
Mother Attachment		
secure	8	43
insecure	7	21
Father Attachment		
secure	5	39
insecure	10	25



Table 11. T-Test Results Comparing Those Who Have and Have Not Witnessed Abuse Between Their Parents During Childhood.

<u>Variable</u>	Witnessed Parental Abuse (n=15) <u>M</u>	Did Not Witness Parental Abuse (n=64) <u>M</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	Degrees of <u>Freedom</u>	<u>2-Tail</u> <u>Probability</u>
1. Experiencing sibling abuse	4.33	3.67	.98	77	.332
2. Amount of dating abuse	9.47	5.95	1.27	34	.214

Table 12. Frequencies of Current Attachment and Those Who Have and Have Not Witnessed Abuse Between Their Parents During Childhood.

	Witnessed Parental Abuse (n=15) <u></u>	Did Not Witness Parental Abuse (n=64) <u></u>
Current Attachment		
secure	7	41
insecure	8	23

T-tests and chi square statistics also were used to compare those who had versus those who had not experienced and/or witnessed abuse by parents during childhood. There was a significant difference for mother attachment ( $\chi^2=4.55$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.031$ ), and a trend towards significance for father attachment (

$\chi^2=3.56$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.056$ ) (Table 13). Results further indicated that those who had either experienced and/or witnessed abuse showed a trend toward being more likely to have experienced sibling abuse as well (compared to those who had not experienced and/or witnessed abuse) (Table 14). Current attachment was not significantly different between the groups ( $\chi^2=1.43$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.230$ ) (Table 15).

Table 13. Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Those Who Either Had Experienced Child Abuse and/or Witnessed Their Parents Abuse One Another During Childhood With Those Who Had No Such Violence In Their Family While Growing Up.

	Parental or Child Abuse <u>(n=38)</u>	No Parental or Child Abuse <u>(n=41)</u>
Mother Attachment		
secure	20	31
insecure	18	10
Father Attachment		
secure	17	27
insecure	21	14

Table 14. T-Test Results Comparing Those Who Either Had Experienced Child Abuse and/or Witnessed Their Parents Abuse One Another During Childhood With Those Who Had No Such Violence In Their Family While Growing Up.

Variable	Parental or Child Abuse (n=38)	No Parental or Child Abuse (n=41)	t Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tail Probability
	M	M			
1. Experiencing sibling abuse	5.00	3.62	1.73	77	.087
2. Amount of dating abuse	8.82	6.80	.67	34	.508

Table 15. Frequencies of Current Attachment and Those Who Either Had Experienced Child Abuse and/or Witnessed Their Parents Abuse One Another During Childhood With Those Who Had No Such Violence In Their Family While Growing Up.

	Parental or Child Abuse (n=38)	No Parental or Child Abuse (n=41)
Current Attachment		
secure	20	27
insecure	18	14

A final set of chi square statistics was used to compare mother and father attachment during childhood and current attachment (Table 16). There were trends towards significance between the groups for both mother ( $\chi^2=2.66$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.10$ ) and father ( $\chi^2=2.996$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.080$ ) attachment.

Table 16. Frequencies of Mother and Father Attachment During Childhood and Current Attachment.

	Secure Current Attachment (n=49)	Insecure Current Attachment (n=30)
Mother Attachment		
secure	35	16
insecure	14	14
Father Attachment		
secure	31	13
insecure	18	17

In summary, results of this study indicate that a poor-quality early family environment was more often found among those who had experienced dating violence than those who had not. Witnessing one's parents abuse one another was the variable most predictive in discriminating between the two groups, followed by having experienced child abuse, less secure mother-child attachment, and less secure father-child attachment. Additionally, those who experienced dating violence were more likely to be separated from their mothers for longer lengths of time and to have overprotective parents compared to the non-violent dating group. Furthermore, where one type of dysfunctional behavior (i.e., witnessing or experiencing abuse, and less than secure parent-child attachment) was occurring in a family, another form was often evident. For example, it appears that those who experienced child abuse were

less securely attached to both their mothers and fathers, and that they experienced sibling abuse more often than those who did not experience child abuse. Those who had witnessed parental abuse were more likely to be insecurely attached to their fathers than those who had not witnessed parental abuse.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between early family environment and courtship violence among females. This study suggests that, in general, early dysfunctional family environments may be related to later dysfunctional (e.g., abusive) dating relationships. First, violence in one's family-of-origin (including sibling abuse) seemed to occur more frequently with subjects who reported having experienced dating violence. Second, individuals in the violent dating group were less securely attached to their mothers and tended to be less securely attached to their fathers than the non-violent dating group. Also, those who experienced dating violence were also more likely to have been separated from their mothers for longer lengths of time as young children compared to those who had not experienced dating violence.

A specific prediction of this study was that those who were insecurely attached to their parents during childhood and/or who had experienced or observed abuse as a child would be more likely to have experienced dating violence. Results from this study support this hypothesis, in that these specific variables (which include, in decreasing order of influence, witnessing parents abuse each other, experiencing child abuse, less secure mother-child attachment, and

less secure father-child attachment) differentiated between the dating violence and non-violent dating groups.

The present study supports some of the literature on courtship violence. For example, either experiencing or observing abuse in one's family is more likely to be experienced by those subjects who experienced dating violence (Bernard & Bernard, 1983; Carroll, 1977; Comins, 1984; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985; Roscoe & Callahan, 1985; Walker, 1983). Parental behavior provides a salient and often emulated role model for children's behavior-- thus, children who witness their parents abuse each other may imitate this behavior when they are in a similar relationship. Observing one's parents become physically violent towards each other may communicate to children the appropriateness of such aggression in intimate relationships. The person may believe that violence is simply an expected part of intimate relationships, and act out such behaviors at a later point in time. Kalmuss (1984) found that a child who witnesses such behavior will repeat it in those specific roles whether as victim or aggressor (i.e., when they become intimately involved they will view violence as an acceptable way of interacting with their partner). Furthermore, Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) found in their study that although both experiencing and witnessing physical abuse in their family of origin were predictors of husband/wife violence, witnessing parental abuse was the stronger

predictor. This study supports both Kalmuss' as well as Sugarman and Hotalings' findings in that witnessing parental abuse was one of the strongest predictors of dating violence.

Experiencing child abuse may give children a distorted world view and decrease the likelihood of their being able to handle various situations without resorting to violence. Moreover, since abused children often have social skill deficits (i.e., difficulty developing basic trust, communication skills, and both sharing and receiving affection) (Barahal, Waterman & Martin, 1981; Kline, 1977; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Lamphear, 1985; Oates, Forrest & Peacock, 1985; Zimrin, 1984) it may be difficult for them to form "healthy" interpersonal relationships as adults. Their distorted perceptions of relationships and acceptance of violence may enable them to feel satisfied in a violent relationship. In sum, both exposure to, and experience with, violence in childhood from one's family appear to increase the likelihood that as an adult one will act or be acted upon more violently. However, witnessing one's parents abuse one another appears to be a more influential factor than experiencing early abuse in distinguishing between those who have and have not experienced courtship violence. Parental abuse may be the stronger predictor since the parents are actually presenting a role model of how to act in intimate relationships.

Results from the current study suggest that those who had



experienced courtship violence were less likely (than those who had not) to be as securely attached to their parents. In summary, a person's early family environment appears to have long lasting effects on a person. This study supports the notion that a poor-quality early family environment can influence an individual in their adult intimate relationships, particularly regarding whether one may be more likely to experience courtship violence.

Results from this study appear to support research stating that when one dysfunctional behavior occurs in the family, others also often occur (Comins, 1984; Tarter et al., 1984). Subjects in the current study who had experienced courtship violence were more likely to have experienced the following: insecure attachments to their parents, abuse from their parents, observation of their parents abusing each other, and abuse by their siblings. Moreover, in both groups, where parents abused their children and/or each other, subjects appeared to be less securely attached to their mothers and fathers as well as being more likely to experience abuse by their siblings. However, if they only witnessed their parents abusing each other in childhood, only the attachment to father seemed to be less secure. The data also suggested that when the frequency of child abuse increased in one's family, so did the frequency of parental abuse. In other words, the more often one form of abuse occurs in the house, the frequency of other types of abuse increases as well.

Hence, these results indicate a general instability in the home.

This study did not find that the quality of subjects' current romantic attachments differed depending on whether or not they had experienced dating violence. On the contrary, those who experienced dating violence more often reported being happy, being friends with their partner, and desiring union with their partner compared to the non-abusive group. Furthermore, the non-violent dating group more often reported fearing closeness to their partner. These results are opposite to what one might intuitively expect. It may be that those who experienced dating violence were more likely to have had dysfunctional early family histories, and that this may have distorted their perceptions of what a relationship or love is (or could be).

Studies show that children who experience child abuse, as well as those who experienced courtship/marital abuse often view the violent encounter as meaning love (e.g., Henton et al., 1983; Matthews, 1984; Straus, 1980). The fact that those who experienced dating violence desire union more than those who have not experienced it is not too surprising. One dynamic in an abusive relationship that may be operating is that one may become psychologically "fused" with one's partner (Dutton & Painter, 1981). This could be true whether there is a power imbalance (Dutton & Painter, 1981; Mason & Blankenship, 1987), or that both partners are extremely dependent on each other (Goldberg, 1982). The literature

also suggests that there may be a very strong bond (called traumatic bonding) between the participants in an abusive relationship (Dutton & Painter, 1981). This bond refers to the strong emotional ties formed when one person intermittently abuses the other. The attachments formed in such situations manifest themselves in positive feelings and attitudes by the victim for the abuser. This bond is also found between children and the parents who abuse them-- there is often extreme attachment between the two, as well as extreme loyalty. Furthermore, a strong "clinging" type bond may occur with people who have experienced abuse, even though that particular relationship is not abusive.

Finally, it is important to note that regardless of whether or not one experienced violent dating relationships, one's security of attachment to their mother and father during childhood does appear to have a slight (though insignificant) influence on the security of attachment in their adult intimate relationships.

#### Limitations of Study

One problem with this study was that there were nine women who were either married, remarried, divorced or widowed in the dating violence category, while only single women were represented in the non-violent dating group. Although the violence reported clearly occurred in dating relationships only, this may have influenced why these individuals might likely have viewed their

current close relationship differently than those in dating relationships only, thus impacting the results on the nature of their current relationship.

Another limitation of this study was that only one item was used to assess the mother-child attachment, father-child attachment, and subject-romantic partner attachment variables, thus limiting the reliability and validity of that factor and the conclusions that can be drawn from these results.

The ability to generalize the results of this study to the entire population is an additional limitation due to the small sample size. Furthermore, the lack of data regarding courtship violence in non-college samples makes it unclear as to what extent the current results may be generalized to dating couples not attending college.

Furthermore, this study did not differentiate between whether or not subjects were the abuser or abused, but combined the two groups. Future research should look at these two groups separately.

In summary, although this study was able to draw some strong conclusions, they should be interpreted cautiously. Future research that would correct the above limitations would be beneficial for a more complete understanding of the relationship between one's early family environment and later intimate relationships, and to see whether these findings also hold for males.

### Summary and Implications

The family environment has been said to be the primary socializer for a person, having a long-term influence on a person's development and their relationships throughout their lives.

According to the current and other studies, those who experience courtship violence often come from dysfunctional families. In these families, poor interpersonal relationship skills combined with exposure to violence may have a significant impact on individuals' later interpersonal relationships. Intervention may be helpful in trying to teach individuals more positive, productive, and healthy ways to interact in intimate relationships.

The frequency of courtship violence is extremely high. In addition, many who have experienced dating abuse typically report having been in previous relationships where violence had occurred (Coleman, 1980; Comins, 1984; Henton et al., 1983; Roscoe & Benaske, 1985). Dating violence may constitute a rehearsal of sorts for later marital violence. Behaviors which occur in dating relationships may establish expectations and patterns of behavior which continue in later marriages. In fact, in a population of abusive dating relationships, Roscoe and Benaske (1985) found that 30% of their subjects actually married the abusive partner.

Laner (1983) found that both marital and premarital violence were affected in similar ways by the sexist nature of society, by

societal tolerance for and approval of violence between intimates and by low probability of social controls operating in private settings. Violence is so entrenched in our society that a person might just look at a violent relationship as normal. Brodbelt (1983) notes that while the family initially teaches aggression, peers, teachers, and others may alter and refine early behaviors. Likewise, between unsupervised dating and the aggressive role models on TV and movies, youth may have a difficult time in determining correct dating behavior. Hence, aggressive role models other than the family may also reinforce this violent behavior. In sum, the approval of violence in this society may also be operating to promote courtship violence.

It is imperative to form intervention programs to help terminate the cycle of violence that continues in this society. Unfortunately, it is not a unique experience but more of an everyday occurrence. According to Strube and Barbour (1983), an estimate of the prevalence of wife abuse suggests that as many as 1.8 million women are beaten by their husbands each year. Furthermore, the violence ends in death for nearly 1,700 women annually. What's more, violence is passed on from generation to generation. In many respects people are taught to possess, control and manipulate those they love. This pattern of behavior must be extinguished.

## Family Environment and Personal Relationships Questionnaire

Instructions: Please read each of the items below and respond as honestly and thoroughly as you can. Do not skip any question.

I. Your Early Experiences: Please answer the following questions concerning your relationship with your mother.

1. During your childhood, were you and she ever separated for what seemed to you like a long time? \_\_\_\_\_ For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did she ever threaten to leave, abandon you, or send you away? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, about how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following best describes your mother while you were growing up? (Please check only one)

\_\_\_\_\_ She was fairly cold, distant, or rejecting, not very responsive; I wasn't her highest priority, her concerns were often elsewhere; It's possible that she would just as soon not have had me.

\_\_\_\_\_ She was noticeably inconsistent in her reactions to me, sometimes warm and sometimes not; She had her own needs and agendas which sometimes got in the way of her receptiveness and responsiveness to my needs; She definitely loved me but didn't always show it in the best way.

\_\_\_\_\_ She was generally warm and responsive; She was good at knowing when to be supportive and when to let me operate on my own; Our relationship was almost always comfortable, and I have no major reservations or complaints about it.

Please answer the following questions concerning your relationship with your father.

4. During your childhood, were you and he ever separated for what seemed to you like a long time? \_\_\_\_\_ For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did he ever threaten to leave, abandon you, or send you away?\_\_\_\_  
If yes, about how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of the following best describes your father while you were growing up? (Please check only one)

- ☐ He was fairly cold, distant, or rejecting, not very responsive; I wasn't his highest priority, his concerns were often elsewhere; It's possible that he would just as soon not have had me.
- ☐ He was noticeably inconsistent in his reactions to me, sometimes warm and sometimes not; He had his own needs and agendas which sometimes got in the way of his receptiveness and responsiveness to my needs; He definitely loved me but didn't always show it in the best way.
- ☐ He was generally warm and responsive; He was good at knowing when to be supportive and when to let me operate on my own; Our relationship was almost always comfortable, and I have no major reservations or complaints about it.



- II. Your Parents' Attitudes: This section of the questionnaire lists various attitudes and behaviors of parents. As you remember your mother/father in your first 16 years would you place a check in the most appropriate brackets next to each question.

	Very like	Moderately like	Moderately unlike	Very unlike
7. Spoke to me with a warm and friendly voice	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. Did not help me as much as I needed	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. Let me do those things I liked doing	( )	( )	( )	( )
10. Seemed emotionally cold to me	( )	( )	( )	( )
11. Appeared to understand my problems and worries	( )	( )	( )	( )
12. Was affectionate to me	( )	( )	( )	( )
13. Liked me to make my own decisions	( )	( )	( )	( )
14. Did not want me to grow up	( )	( )	( )	( )
15. Tried to control everything I did	( )	( )	( )	( )
16. Invaded my privacy	( )	( )	( )	( )
17. Enjoyed talking things over with me	( )	( )	( )	( )
18. Frequently smiled at me	( )	( )	( )	( )
19. Tended to baby me	( )	( )	( )	( )
20. Did not seem to understand what I needed or wanted	( )	( )	( )	( )
21. Let me decide things for myself	( )	( )	( )	( )
22. Made me feel I wasn't wanted	( )	( )	( )	( )
23. Could make me feel better when I was upset	( )	( )	( )	( )
24. Did not talk with me very much	( )	( )	( )	( )
25. Tried to make me dependent on him/her	( )	( )	( )	( )
26. Felt I could not look after myself unless s/he was around	( )	( )	( )	( )
27. Gave me as much freedom as I wanted	( )	( )	( )	( )
28. Let me go out as often as I wanted	( )	( )	( )	( )
29. Was overprotective of me	( )	( )	( )	( )
30. Did not praise me	( )	( )	( )	( )
31. Let me dress in any way I pleased	( )	( )	( )	( )

### III. Discipline Styles of Your Parents

32. Parents use a variety of techniques when disciplining a child. During the years when you were growing up at home, were any of the following ever done to you by one of your parents (or guardians, foster parents, etc.)? Check as many as apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Slapped or spanked me	<input type="checkbox"/> Beaten me up
<input type="checkbox"/> Pushed or shoved me	<input type="checkbox"/> Choked me
<input type="checkbox"/> Bitten me	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened me with a knife
<input type="checkbox"/> Kicked me	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened me with a gun
<input type="checkbox"/> Struck me with a closed fist	<input type="checkbox"/> Assaulted me with a knife
<input type="checkbox"/> Tried to hit me with an object,	<input type="checkbox"/> Assaulted me with a gun
such as a belt, lamp, stick, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (what? _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Struck me with an object,	_____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Thrown an object at me	

33. Siblings also often use physical force on one another during a dispute. During the years when you were growing up at home, were any of the following ever done to you by one of your siblings (or step-siblings)? Check as many as apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Slapped or spanked me	<input type="checkbox"/> Beaten me up
<input type="checkbox"/> Pushed or shoved me	<input type="checkbox"/> Choked me
<input type="checkbox"/> Bitten me	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened me with a knife
<input type="checkbox"/> Kicked me	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened me with a gun
<input type="checkbox"/> Struck me with a closed fist	<input type="checkbox"/> Assaulted me with a knife
<input type="checkbox"/> Tried to hit me with an object,	<input type="checkbox"/> Assaulted me with a gun
such as a belt, lamp, stick, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (what? _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Struck me with an object,	_____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Thrown an object at me	

34. Parents also sometimes use physical force on one another during a dispute. Please indicate whether, while you were growing up at home, you ever observed your parents (or guardians, foster parents, etc.) to do any of the following things to one another. Check as many as apply.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slapped or spanked           | <input type="checkbox"/> Beaten up               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pushed or shoved             | <input type="checkbox"/> Choked                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bitten                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened with a knife |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kicked                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened with a gun   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Struck with a closed fist    | <input type="checkbox"/> Assaulted with a knife  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tried to hit with an object, | <input type="checkbox"/> Assaulted with a gun    |
| such as a belt, lamp, stick, etc.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (what? _____)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Struck with an object,       |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thrown an object             |  |

35. Were you physically abused as a child? 1. yes; 2. no

If yes, who abused you? 1. mother 2. brother or sister  
2. father 3. other \_\_\_\_\_

36. When you were growing up, did physical violence happen in your family? 1. yes 2. no

If yes, who abused who?

- |                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. mother abused father      | 4. mother abused children |
| 2. father abused mother      | 5. father abused children |
| 3. parents abused each other | 6. other _____            |

IV. Your Most Important Love Relationship: Below are 56 questions to be answered about the most important love relationship you feel you have ever had. It may be a past or a current relationship, but choose only the most important one. The blank in each question refers to the other person in that relationship. It is not necessary to fill in his or her name. Please answer every question by placing a check in the most appropriate brackets next to each question.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
37. At the first sight of ____, something clicked; I knew love was possible.	( )	( )	( )	( )
38. Our relationship (was/is) characterized by mutual caring and tenderness.	( )	( )	( )	( )
39. I (couldn't/can't) help feeling jealous when ____ (paid/pays) attention to others.	( )	( )	( )	( )
40. I sometimes (felt/feel) that ____ and I (were/are) in a sense "special people," that our love (was/is) unique.	( )	( )	( )	( )
41. I (was/am) fascinated by the movements and shape of ____'s face and body.	( )	( )	( )	( )
42. ____ (gave/gives) me some of my highest highs and lowest lows.	( )	( )	( )	( )
43. I (could/can) confide in ____ about virtually everything.	( )	( )	( )	( )
44. I (needed/need) ____ to feel complete.	( )	( )	( )	( )
45. My love for ____ (was/is) an extremely enjoyable experience.	( )	( )	( )	( )
46. When I was first in love with ____, I had trouble concentrating on anything else.	( )	( )	( )	( )
47. There (was/is) something absolutely irresistible about ____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
48. I (felt/feel) almost as much pain as joy in my relationship with ____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
49. I (was/am) well aware of ____'s imperfections but it (did/does) not lessen my love.	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
50. I (loved/love) ____ so much that I often (felt/feel) jealous.	( )	( )	( )	( )
51. I (could/can) completely be myself when with ____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
52. Sometimes my thoughts (were/are) uncontrollably on ____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
53. I (wished/wish) I could get closer and closer to ____, that there would be absolutely no barriers between us.	( )	( )	( )	( )
54. No one (realized/realizes) ____'s true worth to the extent that I (did/do).	( )	( )	( )	( )
55. I (seemed/seem) to feel alternately wonderful and miserable with ____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
56. I (considered/consider) ____ one of my best friends.	( )	( )	( )	( )
57. If I couldn't have ____, I'd rather remain alone.	( )	( )	( )	( )
58. ____ always (seemed/seems) to be on my mind.	( )	( )	( )	( )
59. I (found/find) it easy to overlook, some- times even to appreciate, ____'s faults.	( )	( )	( )	( )
60. Nothing (made/makes) me happier than having ____'s attention.	( )	( )	( )	( )
61. I (felt/feel) that I (loved/love) ____ more than I could love anyone else.	( )	( )	( )	( )
62. I sometimes (felt/feel) that getting too close to __ could mean trouble for me.	( )	( )	( )	( )
63. I (sensed/sense) my body responding when ____ (touched/touches) me.	( )	( )	( )	( )
64. I (felt/feel) comfortable, "at home" with ____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
65. Once I noticed ____, I was hooked.	( )	( )	( )	( )
66. I (wanted/want) ____ to be happy, even if it meant the end of our relationship.	( )	( )	( )	( )
67. I (felt/feel) very possessive toward__.	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
68. I (could/can) always depend on _____ for comfort and understanding.	( )	( )	( )	( )
69. _____ (wanted/wants) to get closer than I (felt/feel) comfortable being.	( )	( )	( )	( )
70. I (couldn't/can't) allow myself to be completely known by _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
71. My relationship with _____ (made/makes) me very happy.	( )	( )	( )	( )
72. I (felt/feel) sexually aroused at the sight of _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
73. I (was/am) on an emotional rollercoaster in my relationship with _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
74. It (would have been/would be) hard for _____ to do anything that I could not appreciate or sympathize with in some way.	( )	( )	( )	( )
75. Sometimes I (wished/wish) that _____ and I were a single unit, a "we" without clear boundaries.	( )	( )	( )	( )
76. I (felt/feel) _____ (was/is) the only romantic partner for me.	( )	( )	( )	( )
77. I (avoided/avoid) getting too "hung up" on _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
78. More than anything, I (wanted/want) _____ to return my feelings.	( )	( )	( )	( )
79. I (felt/feel) comfortable expressing my true thoughts and feelings to _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
80. I eagerly (looked/look) for signs indicating _____ 's desire for me.	( )	( )	( )	( )
81. I (felt/feel) complete trust in _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
82. Being in love with _____ (was/is) the best possible feeling.	( )	( )	( )	( )
83. I would rather (have been/be) with _____ than anyone else.	( )	( )	( )	( )
84. I (saw/see) qualities in _____ that others				

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(failed/fail) to see.	( )	( )	( )	( )
85. I often (wondered/wonder) if _____ truly (loved/loves) me.	( )	( )	( )	( )
86. I (was/am) very physically attracted to _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
87. I often (worried/worry) that _____ (would/ will) leave me for someone else.	( )	( )	( )	( )
88. I (seemed/seem) to have no control over my attraction to _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
89. It (was/is) more important to me that _____ be happy in life than that s/he stay with me.	( )	( )	( )	( )
90. The greatest happiness I've known (was/has been) with _____.	( )	( )	( )	( )
91. I (melted/melt) when looking into _____ 's eyes.	( )	( )	( )	( )
92. At times, I (wished/wish) that _____ and I could just melt into each other, that we could get beyond our separateness.	( )	( )	( )	( )
93. Did you describe a current or a past relationship above?				
_____ Current      _____ Past				
What is your present relationship with the person you were describing?				
_____ I am married to him/her.				
_____ We were married but now I am divorced/widowed.				
_____ I am living with the person, but we aren't married.				
_____ I am dating the person, but we are not living together.				
_____ I am no longer involved with him/her.				

94. Which of the following best describes your feelings? (Please check only one)

- ☐ I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.
- ☐ I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.
- ☐ I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.



- V. Your Dating Experiences: For the remaining questions "partner" refers to a person of the opposite sex that you were dating, courting, or cohabiting with, or engaged to. Violence refers to overt physical acts done with harmful intent or for self defense. Do not include acts done in "play" or "just for fun."

If you have never been involved in an incident of violence with a dating or courtship partner, simply check below and skip to #136.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have never been involved in any form of courtship violence.

95. Please check whether any of the following acts have ever been done to you by a partner you were dating, engaged to, or living with, and any that have happened within the last 12 months.

Partner has:	Has ever happened	Happened within previous year
Thrown an object at me	_____	_____
Pushed or shoved me	_____	_____
Slapped or spanked me	_____	_____
Kicked me	_____	_____
Bitten me	_____	_____
Punched me	_____	_____
Choked me	_____	_____
Tried to hit me with an object	_____	_____
Struck me with an object	_____	_____
Beaten me up	_____	_____
Threatened me with a knife	_____	_____
Threatened me with a gun	_____	_____
Assaulted me with a knife	_____	_____
Assaulted me with a gun	_____	_____
Other (specify _____)	_____	_____

96. Now, please check whether any of the following acts have ever been done by you to a partner you were dating, engaged to, or living with, and whether each has happened within the last 12 months.

I have:	Has ever happened	Happened within previous year
Thrown object at a partner	_____	_____
Pushed or shoved a partner	_____	_____
Slapped or spanked a partner	_____	_____
Kicked a partner	_____	_____
Bitten a partner	_____	_____
Punched a partner	_____	_____
Choked a partner	_____	_____
Tried to hit partner with an object	_____	_____
Struck a partner with an object	_____	_____
Beaten up a partner	_____	_____
Threatened a partner with a knife	_____	_____
Threatened a partner with a gun	_____	_____
Assaulted a partner with a knife	_____	_____
Assaulted a partner with a gun	_____	_____
Other (specify _____)	_____	_____

97. Altogether, on how many separate occasions have you been involved in overt physical violence with a partner? \_\_\_\_\_

## VI Background Information

98. How old are you now? \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
99. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_ female; \_\_\_\_\_ male
100. What is your current status? (Check all that apply)
- |                                  |                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| _____ dating                     | _____ remarried |
| _____ never married              | _____ separated |
| _____ living with a lover        | _____ divorced  |
| _____ married for the first time | _____ widowed   |
101. What is your racial status?
- |             |                |                             |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ White | _____ Hispanic | _____ Other (specify) _____ |
| _____ Black | _____ Asian    |                             |
102. What is your religious affiliation?
- |                  |                              |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ Protestant | _____ Adventist              |
| _____ Catholic   | _____ Atheist or Agnostic    |
| _____ Jewish     | _____ Other (specify: _____) |
103. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- \_\_\_\_\_ grade school or less
- \_\_\_\_\_ some high school
- \_\_\_\_\_ high school
- \_\_\_\_\_ some college
- \_\_\_\_\_ college
- \_\_\_\_\_ some graduate or professional school
- \_\_\_\_\_ received a graduate or professional degree
104. What is your approximate household annual income?
- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ under \$10,000       | _____ \$30,000 to \$40,000 |
| _____ \$10,000 to \$20,000 | _____ \$40,000 to \$60,000 |
| _____ \$20,000 to \$30,000 | _____ over \$60,000        |
105. Estimate an annual income for your family while you were growing up?
- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ under \$10,000       | _____ \$30,000 to \$40,000 |
| _____ \$10,000 to \$20,000 | _____ \$40,000 to \$60,000 |
| _____ \$20,000 to \$30,000 | _____ over \$60,000        |
106. Who did you live with while growing up?
- |                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ both parents | _____ mother and step parent |
| _____ mother only  | _____ father and step parent |

- \_\_\_\_ father only      \_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_
107. Indicate fathers educational attainment:
- \_\_\_\_ No degree (did not complete high school)  
\_\_\_\_ High school diploma      \_\_\_\_ BA/BS degree  
\_\_\_\_ Trade school diploma      \_\_\_\_ MA/MS degree  
\_\_\_\_ AA/AS degree      \_\_\_\_ PhD
108. Indicate mothers educational attainment:
- \_\_\_\_ No degree (did not complete high school)  
\_\_\_\_ High school diploma      \_\_\_\_ BA/BS degree  
\_\_\_\_ Trade school diploma      \_\_\_\_ MA/MS degree  
\_\_\_\_ AA/AS degree      \_\_\_\_ PhD
109. How many brothers/sisters do you have (not counting yourself)? \_\_\_\_\_
110. At about what age did you begin dating? \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept our sincere thanks for sharing your views and experiences on this very personal and sensitive subject with us.

## APPENDIX B

### Family Environment and Personal Relationships

### Consent to Participate in Psychological Research

Attached is a Family Environment and Personal Relationships Questionnaire that seeks to identify what your early family environment and dating experiences have been like. All questionnaires are strictly confidential; no names or other identifying information will be used. The signed consent forms will be held completely separate from the questionnaires. Survey completion is on a voluntary basis and you may discontinue your participation at any time. Please answer all questions as honestly and thoroughly as possible. Thank you very much.

I have read and I understand the above statement and hereby give my consent to be a subject in this research effort:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C

### Debriefing Form

The incidence of violence in dating relationships is alarmingly high. Many people unnecessarily experience unhealthy and/or unhappy relationships which cause both physical and emotional harm to both members of the violent relationship that last throughout their life. Studies show that premarital violence may constitute a rehearsal of sorts for later marital violence. These factors make it imperative to examine and identify the origin of such behavior, so that interventions may be applied to terminate the maladaptive cycle of behavior.

The first social relationship to form is the early parent-child relationship. Literature suggests that the way you learn to interact in this relationship may influence the way you interact in other interpersonal relationships later in life. This pattern of interaction may also influence how one functions in later conflict situations and whether or not a situation will become physically violent. For example, studies indicate that people who have experienced dating violence often either experienced and/or observed abuse in their family of origin. Furthermore, research has found that individuals involved in violent dating relationships tend to report less closeness with their parents.

The primary purpose of this study is to try and identify the

origin of violent behavior in dating relationships. Hence, I am looking to see if a person's early family experiences may have an influence on how a person acts in later dating relationships.

General results will be available in November, and if you are interested in obtaining results from this study, you may leave your address with the experimenter.

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